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Work Related Injuries and Illnesses

South Australia



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NEW ISSUE

**WORK RELATED INJURIES AND ILLNESSES
SOUTH AUSTRALIA
OCTOBER 1996**

**P.M. Gardner
Regional Director**

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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CONTENTS

		Page
	Preface	v
	Main Features	1
TABLES		
Employed in October 1996	1 Coverage of workers' compensation by industry	2
	2 Coverage of workers' compensation by sex and full-time/part-time employment status	2
	3 Coverage of workers' compensation by main language spoken at home	3
	4 Source of knowledge of workers' compensation	3
	5 Workers' compensation schemes	4
Employed in the last 12 months	6 Work related injuries and illnesses by age and sex	4
Injured in the last 12 months	7 Incidents resulting in work related injury or illness	5
	8 Type of most recent injury or illness	5
	9 Application for workers' compensation benefits by industry	6
	10 Application for workers' compensation by occupation	6
	11 Main reason for not applying for workers' compensation	7
	12 Time away from work due to most recent work related injury or illness	7
	.. Explanatory Notes	8
	.. Data Quality	10

PREFACE

This publication contains results relating to the Work Related Injuries and Illnesses Survey conducted throughout South Australia in October 1996. The major objectives of the survey were to assess the level of awareness of workers to their compensation rights when injured at work, to quantify the level, impact and types of injuries suffered at work and whether compensation was sought.

Explanatory and Data Quality Notes are located on pages 8-11 .

For more information about the statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Gary Niedorfer Adelaide (08) 8237 7379 or any ABS Office.

For information about other ABS statistics and services please contact Information Services on Adelaide (08) 8237 7100, call at 55 Currie Street, Adelaide, or write to Information Services, ABS, GPO Box 2272, Adelaide, South Australia 5001.

P.M. Gardner
Regional Director

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Adelaide
December 1996

MAIN FEATURES

COVERAGE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION

In October 1996, 493,300 (76.4%) workers aged 15 to 69 years thought they were covered by workers compensation. The Government administration and defence industry had the highest coverage with 98.2% while Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and mining, industry group had the lowest with 35.7%.

Full-time workers were more likely to be covered than part-time workers (81.6% compared to 63.6%). Two-thirds of female part-time workers were covered compared to one half of male part-timers.

Workers who speak 'a language other than English' at home were less likely to be covered than those who speak mainly English (63.3% compared to 77.0%).

Nearly four out of ten workers (38.8%) covered by workers' compensation did not know which scheme applied.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

An estimated 722,700 South Australians aged between 15 and 69 years were employed at some time during the 12 months ending October 1996.

INCIDENCE OF INJURIES/ILLNESSES

In the last 12 months 81,100 workers suffered a work related injury or illness with 13.4% of male and 8.6% of female workers affected. Over one in seven (15.7%) 25-34 year old male workers were injured or suffered an illness.

Sprains, strains and/or torn ligaments or muscles was the most common type of injury suffered with 34,600 (42.7%) of injured workers affected.

APPLICATION FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Over half (55.1%) of the workers who suffered a work related injury or illness did not apply for workers compensation.

The main reason for not applying was that the injury or illness was considered minor (59.1%).

TIME OFF WORK

Over one-third (37.1%) of work related injuries or illnesses resulted in no time off work. Nearly 14% of injuries or illnesses resulted in the worker having more than 4 weeks away from work or permanently unable to work.

1

COVERAGE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION BY INDUSTRY¹

Industry	Covered		Not covered		Don't know/not sure		Total	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and mining	17.1	35.7	27.5	57.5	3.3	6.8	47.9	100.0
Manufacturing	80.9	92.1	4.8	5.5	*2.1	*2.4	87.9	100.0
Construction	22.2	62.0	12.8	35.8	*0.8	*2.1	35.7	100.0
Wholesale and retail trade, and accommodation, cafes etc	108.3	74.6	19.8	13.7	17.1	11.8	145.3	100.0
Electricity, gas and water, and communication services	13.0	90.7	*0.6	*4.2	*0.7	*5.2	14.3	100.0
Transport and storage	21.0	81.4	4.0	15.7	*0.8	*3.0	25.8	100.0
Finance, property and business services	53.5	74.6	12.5	17.4	5.7	7.9	71.7	100.0
Government administration and defence	21.2	98.2	*0.4	*1.8	-	-	21.6	100.0
Education, health, and community services	103.0	87.5	8.2	7.0	6.5	5.5	117.7	100.0
Recreation, personal and other services	26.1	70.5	8.0	21.7	*2.9	*7.8	37.0	100.0
Not stated	27.0	66.6	9.1	22.5	4.4	10.9	40.6	100.0
Total	493.3	76.4	108.0	16.7	44.2	6.8	645.4	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who were employed in October 1996.

2

COVERAGE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION BY SEX AND FULL-TIME/PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT STATUS¹

Full-time/part-time	Covered		Not covered		Don't know/not sure		Total	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
MALES								
Full-time	251.0	80.0	53.2	16.9	9.8	3.1	313.9	100.0
Part-time	22.8	50.4	14.8	32.6	7.7	17.0	45.3	100.0
All males	273.8	76.2	68.0	18.9	17.5	4.9	359.3	100.0
FEMALES								
Full-time	124.8	85.1	15.3	10.5	6.6	4.5	146.6	100.0
Part-time	94.7	67.9	24.7	17.7	20.2	14.4	139.5	100.0
All females	219.4	76.7	40.0	14.0	26.7	9.3	286.2	100.0
PERSONS								
Full-time	375.7	81.6	68.5	14.9	16.3	3.5	460.6	100.0
Part-time	117.5	63.6	39.5	21.3	27.9	15.1	184.9	100.0
All persons	493.3	76.4	108.0	16.7	44.2	6.8	645.4	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who were employed in October 1996.

3

COVERAGE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION BY MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME¹

Main language spoken at home	Covered		Not covered		Don't know/not sure		Total	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
English	475.9	77.0	101.5	16.4	40.6	6.6	618.0	100.0
Non-English languages—								
Italian	4.1	91.9	*0.2	*4.1	*0.2	*4.0	4.4	100.0
Greek	*2.9	*50.8	*2.1	*35.5	*0.8	*13.7	5.8	100.0
Other ²	10.4	60.2	4.2	24.4	*2.7	*15.4	17.2	100.0
Total	17.4	63.3	6.4	23.5	3.6	13.2	27.4	100.0
Total	493.3	76.4	108.0	16.7	44.2	6.8	645.4	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who were employed in October 1996.

2 Other includes not stated.

4

SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION¹

Source from which workers learned about workers' compensation	'000
Employer	210.2
Common knowledge	184.7
Brochures, posters, other reading material	49.2
When making a claim	19.5
Workers' union	16.2
Media	11.7
Other	44.6
Don't know	26.6
Total²	493.3

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who were employed in October 1996 and are covered by workers' compensation.

2 As persons may report more than one source, categories will not add to the total.

5

WORKERS' COMPENSATION SCHEMES¹

<i>Scheme by which workers think they are covered</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>
SA WorkCover	228.9	46.4
Self-insured employer	51.5	10.4
Comcare	10.0	2.0
Other type of scheme specified	11.5	2.3
<i>Total aware of scheme</i>	<i>301.9</i>	<i>61.2</i>
Don't know/not sure	191.3	38.8
Total	493.3	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who were employed in October 1996 and are covered by workers' compensation.

6

WORK RELATED INJURIES AND ILLNESSES BY AGE AND SEX¹

<i>Age</i>	<i>Injured</i>		<i>Non-injured</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>'000</i>	<i>%</i>
MALES						
15-24 years	10.0	14.5	59.0	85.5	69.0	100.0
25-34 years	16.1	15.7	86.7	84.3	102.8	100.0
35-44 years	11.6	11.6	87.7	88.4	99.3	100.0
45-54 years	11.4	14.0	70.2	86.0	81.6	100.0
55-69 years	3.8	8.9	39.4	91.1	43.2	100.0
<i>All males</i>	<i>52.9</i>	<i>13.4</i>	<i>343.1</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>396.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
FEMALES						
15-24 years	5.9	8.6	62.0	91.4	67.9	100.0
25-34 years	6.1	7.5	75.5	92.5	81.6	100.0
35-44 years	8.0	9.2	79.2	90.8	87.2	100.0
45-54 years	7.1	10.7	59.2	89.3	66.2	100.0
55-69 years	*1.2	*4.9	22.7	95.1	23.9	100.0
<i>All females</i>	<i>28.2</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>298.6</i>	<i>91.4</i>	<i>326.8</i>	<i>100.0</i>
PERSONS						
15-24 years	15.9	11.6	121.0	88.4	136.9	100.0
25-34 years	22.2	12.0	162.2	88.0	184.4	100.0
35-44 years	19.6	10.5	167.0	89.5	186.5	100.0
45-54 years	18.5	12.5	129.3	87.5	147.8	100.0
55-69 years	5.0	7.5	62.1	92.5	67.1	100.0
All persons	81.1	11.2	641.6	88.8	722.7	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who are employed or have been employed in the last 12 months.

7

INCIDENTS RESULTING IN WORK RELATED INJURY OR ILLNESS¹

Number of incidents	'000	%
One	66.3	81.7
Two	10.5	12.9
Three or more	4.3	5.3
Total	81.1	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness in the last 12 months.

8

TYPE OF MOST RECENT INJURY OR ILLNESS¹

Type of injury or illness	'000
Injury and poisoning—	
Sprains, strains and/or torn ligaments or muscles	34.6
Cuts, open wounds or puncture wounds	15.7
Bruising and/or crushing injuries	8.6
Broken or fractured bones, dislocation	3.5
Other	8.2
Total injury and poisoning ²	64.5
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and the connective tissue	8.8
Mental disorders and stress	3.8
Diseases of the respiratory system	3.1
Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue	*2.2
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organ	*1.2
Other diseases	*1.1
Total²	81.1

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness in the last 12 months.

2 As persons may report more than one injury/illness, categories will not add to the total.

9

APPLICATION FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS BY INDUSTRY¹

Industry ²	Applied		Did not apply		Total ³	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and mining	*2.8	*28.8	6.8	71.2	9.6	100.0
Manufacturing	10.6	56.4	8.0	42.5	18.8	100.0
Construction	*2.8	*46.3	3.2	53.7	6.0	100.0
Wholesale and retail trade, and accommodation, cafes etc.	5.4	42.1	7.4	57.9	12.7	100.0
Transport and storage	*2.9	*62.2	*1.8	*37.8	4.7	100.0
Government administration and defence	*2.7	*55.6	*1.7	*36.0	4.8	100.0
Education, health, and community services	4.8	32.7	9.8	66.2	14.8	100.0
Utilities and other services ⁴	3.7	38.5	6.0	61.5	9.7	100.0
Total	35.7	44.0	44.7	55.1	81.1	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness in the last 12 months.

2 Industry of employer in which the injury or illness occurred.

3 Total includes persons who did not know if they applied for workers' compensation.

4 Utilities and other services includes Electricity, gas and water, Finance, property and business services, Recreation, personal and other services.

10

APPLICATION FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION BY OCCUPATION¹

Occupation ²	Applied		Did not apply		Total ³	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Managers and administrators	*2.1	*24.4	6.4	75.6	8.5	100.0
Professionals	*1.9	*30.0	4.4	70.0	6.3	100.0
Para-professionals	*2.5	*40.9	3.4	56.4	6.1	100.0
Tradespersons	8.8	48.6	9.1	50.3	18.1	100.0
Clerks	*2.6	*41.8	3.6	58.2	6.2	100.0
Sales and personal service workers	3.4	35.5	6.2	64.5	9.6	100.0
Plant and machine operators and drivers	5.3	58.1	3.6	39.8	9.0	100.0
Labourers and related workers	9.2	53.0	7.9	45.8	17.3	100.0
Total	35.7	44.0	44.7	55.1	81.1	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness in the last 12 months.

2 Occupation in which the injury or illness occurred.

3 Total includes persons who did not know if they applied for workers' compensation.

11 MAIN REASON FOR NOT APPLYING FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION¹

Main reason	'000	%
Minor injury or illness not necessary	26.4	59.1
Self-employed — not eligible	8.3	18.7
Did not think eligible	*1.6	*3.5
Other	8.4	18.7
Total	44.7	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness but did not apply for workers' compensation.

12 TIME AWAY FROM WORK DUE TO MOST RECENT WORK RELATED INJURY OR ILLNESS¹

Weeks away from work	'000	%
No time	30.1	37.1
Up to 2 weeks	33.6	41.4
More than 2 and up to 4 weeks	3.9	4.9
More than 4 and up to 13 weeks	7.2	8.9
More than 13 weeks	*2.7	*3.3
Permanently unable to work	*1.3	*1.6
Unknown	*2.3	*2.8
Total	81.1	100.0

1 Persons aged 15-69 years who suffered a work related injury or illness in the last 12 months.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This publication summarises the results of a survey of Work Related Injuries and Illnesses. It was conducted throughout South Australia during October 1996 as a supplement to the Australia-wide Monthly Population Survey (MPS) (which is described in *Labour Force, Australia* (6203.0)).

Information was collected from individuals about their awareness of coverage by workers compensation and awareness of employer initiatives to improve occupational health and safety in the workplace. Respondents who had experienced or first became aware of a work-related injury or illness in the last twelve months were asked details of their most recent injury or illness, their work history and the impact of the most recent injury or illness on their work. In addition to the demographic and employment information obtained as part of the MPS, language spoken at home and proficiency in English was asked.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using a multi-stage area sample of approximately 3,400 private dwellings. The MPS was conducted during the two weeks commencing 8 October 1996. The sample covers about 0.6% of dwellings in South Australia.

SCOPE

The survey was conducted for persons aged between 15 and 69 years who were employed at some time in the last 12 months and were usual residents of private dwellings except:

- (a) members of permanent defence forces;
- (b) certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from censuses and surveys;
- (c) overseas residents in Australia; and
- (d) members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependents) stationed in Australia.

Residents of other non-private dwellings such as hospitals, motels and jails were excluded from this survey.

COVERAGE

For the survey, coverage rules were applied which aimed to ensure that each person was associated with only one dwelling, and hence had only one chance of selection in the survey. Work related injuries and illnesses questionnaires were asked of all persons within the scope of the survey.

DEFINITIONS

Work related injury.

A work related injury is any injury suffered from accidents while on work duty. This includes injuries resulting from accidents at the place of work, during work breaks or outside the place of work but while on work duty. Injuries which occur due to accidents while commuting to and from work or during work breaks while outside the place of work are included for Commonwealth employees only.

Work related illness.

A work related illness is any illness contracted due to, or aggravated by work. For example industrial deafness, repetitive strain injury (RSI), hernia, skin diseases, etc.

Workers' compensation.

Workers' compensation refers to the right of workers to seek compensation from their employers for work related injuries or illnesses. The survey obtained the workers' own perception as to whether they were covered by workers' compensation. It is possible that there may be differences in actual workers' compensation rights and the views of the workers themselves.

Self-insured employer.

Self-insured employers are registered with WorkCover as a self-insurer. They cover their own risk and are directly responsible for workers' compensation for their employees.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Population Survey Monitor, Australia (4103.0), Quarterly; May 1994, August 1994, November 1994, February 1995.

Work Related Injuries and Illnesses, New South Wales (6301.1) October 1993.

UNPUBLISHED DATA

In some cases, additional unpublished cross-classifications of data items are available. A charge is made for providing unpublished information. Inquires should be made to Gary Niedorfer on (08) 8237 7379.

SYMBOLS AND
OTHER USAGES

- * use with caution, relative standard error 25% or higher
- nil occurrences or rounded to zero

Refer to Data Quality on page 10.

Figures have been rounded and discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals shown. Published percentages are calculated prior to the rounding of figures and therefore some discrepancies may exist between published percentages and those that could be calculated from the rounded figures.

DATA QUALITY

RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES

The estimates provided in this publication may be subject to two types of error.

Non-sampling error

Inaccuracies may occur because of imperfections in reporting by respondents, and errors made in the processing and coding of the data. These errors can occur whether the estimates are derived from a sample or a complete enumeration. Every effort is made to reduce non-sampling error to a minimum by careful design of questionnaires, intensive training and supervision of interviewers, and effective operating procedures.

Sampling error

Since the estimates in this publication are based on information obtained from occupants of a sample of dwellings they are subject to sampling variability; that is, they may differ from the figures that would have been produced if all dwellings had been included in the survey. One measure of the likely difference is given by the standard error, which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of dwellings had been included. There are about two chances in three that the sample estimate will differ by less than one standard error from the figure that would have been obtained if all dwellings had been included, and about nineteen chances in twenty that the difference will be less than two standard errors.

A standard error expressed as a percentage of the estimate is known as the 'relative standard error'. For example, if an estimate of 50,000 persons had a standard error of 2,500, then the estimate has a relative standard error of $2,500/50,000 \times 100 = 5.0\%$.

STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATES

Table A below gives standard errors for general application to estimates of numbers of persons. These figures will not give a precise measure of the standard error of a particular estimate, but they will provide an indication of its magnitude.

The size of the standard error increases with the level of the estimate, so that the larger the estimate the larger is the standard error. However, it should be noted that the larger the sampling estimate, the smaller will be the standard error in percentage terms. Thus, estimates derived from a larger sample will be relatively more reliable than estimates derived from a smaller sample.

Estimates derived from very small sample sizes are subject to such high standard errors (relative to the size of the estimate) as to detract seriously from their value for most reasonable uses. Only estimates with standard errors less than 25% are considered sufficiently reliable for most purposes. Estimates less than 3,000 have a relative error greater than 25% and have been indicated with the symbol *.

An example of the calculation and use of standard errors is as follows:

From Table 1 (see page 2), an estimated 645,400 persons were employed in October 1996. An estimate of 645,400 has a standard error of between 5,800 and 7,350. Using interpolation it can be seen that the estimate has a standard error of about 6,250.

There are about two chances in three (66.7%) that the number that would have been estimated if all dwellings had been included in the survey lies in the range 639,150 and 651,650. There are about nineteen chances in twenty (95%) that the number lies between 632,900 and 657,900.

Percentages formed from the ratio of two estimates of the same type (such as proportions) are also subject to sampling error. The size of the error depends on the accuracy of both the numerator (x) and the denominator (y). The formula for the relative standard error (RSE) of a percentage is given below.

$$RSE(\frac{x}{y}) = \sqrt{[RSE(x)]^2 + [RSE(y)]^2}$$

A STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATES OF PERSONS

Size of estimate (persons)	Standard error of estimate	Relative standard error
Number	Number	%
1 000	450	44.7
2 000	600	31.0
3 000	750	25.1
4 000	850	21.3
5 000	950	18.9
8 000	1 150	14.5
10 000	1 300	12.8
20 000	1 700	8.6
30 000	2 000	6.7
40 000	2 250	5.7
50 000	2 500	5.0
100 000	3 250	3.2
200 000	4 200	2.1
300 000	4 850	1.6
400 000	4 650	1.2
500 000	5 800	1.2
1 000 000	7 350	0.7
2 000 000	9 150	0.5

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